July 24, 2020

Lifeline of Cricket

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DIAMOND

IRELAND'S WIN IS A CRYPTIC MESSAGE TO CRICKET

CAN 'CAPTAIN' ROHIT SHARMA BE THE NEXT DHONI OF TEAM INDIA?

BALANCING FTP, T20S VERSUS WORLD CUP SCHEDULING

BABAR HAS IT IN HIM TO MAKE IT A FAB FIVE

MS DHONI: THE BELOVED SON OF INDIA BIDS ADIEU

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Cricket today

10,773 runs in 350 ODIs, 4876 in 90 Tests, 1617 runs in T20Is, 829 dismissals as wicket-keeper. If one goes by numbers alone, the just-retired MS Dhoni has made a gigantic contribution to Indian cricket. Add it to his crowning glory as a skipper -- two World Cups, and a Champions Trophy triumph. However, Dhoni's stats are just sizzlers in the vast menu that the former captain put out on display on the international stage -- as a player, as a leader, and as an individual as a whole. Dhoni's presence in the Indian team over the last decade and a half has transformed the team's fortunes like few before him have done. In his very first World Cup, Dhoni proved what a shrewd thinker he is. His instinctive style often caught the opponents off-guard, none more prominently than in the final when his decision to give the unheralded Joginder Sharma the last over proved to be a master-stroke. As a leader, Dhoni was often one step ahead of the opposition. His decision to promote himself in the 2011 World Cup final, ahead of the supremely in-form Yuvraj Singh, was a highly calculated move. With Gautam Gambhir out in the middle, the Indian captain was aware that a left-right combo would make the Sri Lankan bowlers work harder. While Indian cricketers have always been known for their charity work, most of them, be it Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, former India captain, MS Dhoni, or the current Indian captain, Virat Kohli, have made donations via trusts or by some foundations. But Irfan Pathan has been different. He not only donates but makes sure that the donation reaches the person it is meant for. Irfan along-with his brother has always been one of the most charitable cricketers of the current era. But it took a pandemic like Coronavirus for the world to realize and be aware of the deeds of kindness by the all-rounder brothers. There is obviously a lot of anticipation over the conduct of the long-awaited IPL. The popular cash-rich tournament is normally held in the March-May window but because of reasons that have been well documented there was a great deal of suspense over whether it would be held at all. Now of course the suspense is over, the IPL will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10 and the long wait has already whetted the appetite of cricket fans. And summing up the euphoria is King's XI Punjab co-owner Ness Wadia who is confident that the 13th edition of the event is set to be ``the best ever.'' But he is also concerned about the safety of the players and all others involved. Enjoy the action-packed edition of Cricket Today...

MS Dhoni has made a gigantic contribution to Indian cricket.

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WHAT'S HOT
WHAT'S NOT

MOHAMMAD HAFEEZ

He has rejoined the squad after testing negative for coronavirus, despite him breaching the team's bio-security bubble earlier this week. Hafeez has gone into self-isolation after getting clicked with an elderly woman on a golf course.

KARUN NAIR

Kings XI Punjab has denied the reports that Karun Nair had tested positive for the COVID-19. According to the Chief Executive of Kings XI Punjab (KXIP), Nair had "mild fever" and he is training ahead of KXIP's departure to the United Arab Emirates.

MS DHONI

He is all set to make his comeback while leading Chennai Super Kings in IPL 2020. The former India skipper has tested negative for the COVID-19. He had submitted his swab to a private hospital and the test has come out to be negative.

VIRAT KOHLI

Virat Kohli is the most popular cricketer in the world. Due to brand endorsements and his performance, the 31-year old has also become the most searched player online for the period of January to June 2020.

JOFRA ARCHER

Jofra Archer was left out of the England side for the second Test against Pakistan at the Ageas Bowl. He has played three of the four Tests so far this summer, only missing out due to a breach of bio-security rules during the West Indies series.

RAMNARESH SARWAN

Jamaica Tallawahs' assistant coach Ramnaresh Sarwan has opted out of the tournament due to personal reasons. He was recently involved in a controversy when Gayle lambasted him for his role in his exit from the franchise.

RAVINDRA JADEJA

He will not be a part of the six-day practice camp of the Chennai Super Kings due to personal commitments. However, he will reach Chennai on time to board the flight to the UAE. Jadeja is one of the most important players of the franchise.

AB DE VILLIERS

He threatened to walk out of the team if Khaya Zondo was selected in the squad for the fifth and final ODI against India. Zondo's name was removed from the XI hours before the match, contrary to the CSA selection policy.

QUOTES

"Babar Azam should be there in the IPL, he's phenomenal"

NASSER HUSSAIN ON PAK'S PREMIER BATSMAN

"I couldn't say anything for 10 minutes"

KULDEEP ON HIS FIRST MEETING WITH WARNE

"I still want to bowl fast and I'm not going to compromise"

MITCHELL STARC ON BOWLING FAST

"Even the reduced 18 months ban is hard on him"

KAMRAN ON UMAR'S BAN

VITAL LESSON OF LIFE

The apex body of international cricket postponed the Women's ODI World Cup 2021, which was supposed to be played in New Zealand. The event has been moved to 2022. Australia's star women cricketer Alyssa Healy took to Twitter to give her reaction following the announcement from the ICC. The 30-year old didn't like the decision as New Zealand has only 23 active COVID-19 cases and the women's event could have been organized. Commenting on her tweet, one of the Indian fans tried to mock her using her spouse's name. However, she was ready and gave him a befitting reply. "Mitchell Starc won't get IPL contract," the troll wrote. In reply, Alyssa sarcastically wrote: "Oh no! How will he manage."

Sturdy physique of Mandeep

It is often believed that vegan athletes who follow their diet chart religiously are fitter and stronger than others. Contradicting that belief, India batsman Mandeep Singh has said that it is 'Doodh Ghee Makhhan' the fattest rich dairy products that have helped him gain a sturdy physique. Mandeep, who has played three T20Is so far, posted a photo of himself on his official Instagram account claiming that he is feeling the fittest that he has felt in years. While captioning the photo, he also took a sly dig at players like Indian captain Virat Kohli who has gone all vegan and is considered the epitome of physical fitness in world cricket.

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TWO WEIRDOS IN LOVE

Indian opener Rohit hasn't played any game since the past six months, owing to the threat of coronavirus. Hitman is spending quality time with his lovely wife Ritika and daughter Samaira. He is posting the videos and pictures of his daughter on a regular basis. He recently uploaded an adorable photo of his better half. The 33-year-old batsman recently took to his official Instagram handle and shared a picture of Ritika imitating his "weird" pose from the training session. The caption of the post caught the attention of Rohit Sharma's fans and followers. "Just two weirdos in love," the cricketer wrote. However, Ritika was also quick to reply to her husband's post. She commented, "Hahaha owning the weirdness is key."

TERRIBLE INCIDENT OF LIFE

Former Test captain Ricky Ponting recently opened up about the terrible moments where he thought his son would die. Fletcher Ponting has encountered two near-death experiences in his five years of life. The son has courageously won both the terrifying battles. Fletcher was just six weeks old when the family saw him fighting with meningitis. And, when he was eight months old he contracted with an infection during hernia surgery. The MRSA infection took hold of Fletcher within days of his operation and left him in agony. Ponting remembered the night when more than 15 doctors and nurses struggled to save the infectious body of his son.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Virat Kohli is all set to lead Royal Challengers Bangalore in the upcoming IPL season. Even the franchises have become active ahead of the grand tournament in the UAE. Royal Challengers Bangalore recently shared a collage of two pictures featuring Virat and a lion on its official Twitter handle. Sharing the post, RCB wrote, "Spot the differences, because we are not able to." The tweet caught the attention of many cricket fanatics in no time but the reaction of Chahal left everyone in splits. "Difference hmmm in the first pic wearing clothes and in 2nd pic widout clothes," the 30-year-old spinner wrote.

CSK CHECKMATE CHAHAL

Marriages are made in heaven they say, but when you get engaged, the leg-pulling from friends start. When Chahal got engaged with Dhanashree, he wouldn't have thought that he would get trolled. However, the latest one by the Chennai Super Kings is probably the wittiest till now. "Congratulations guys! Personal advice to Yuzi from the Kings: Surrender to the Queen, otherwise checkmate only!"

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RAPE THREATS FOR SUPPORTING PUJAN

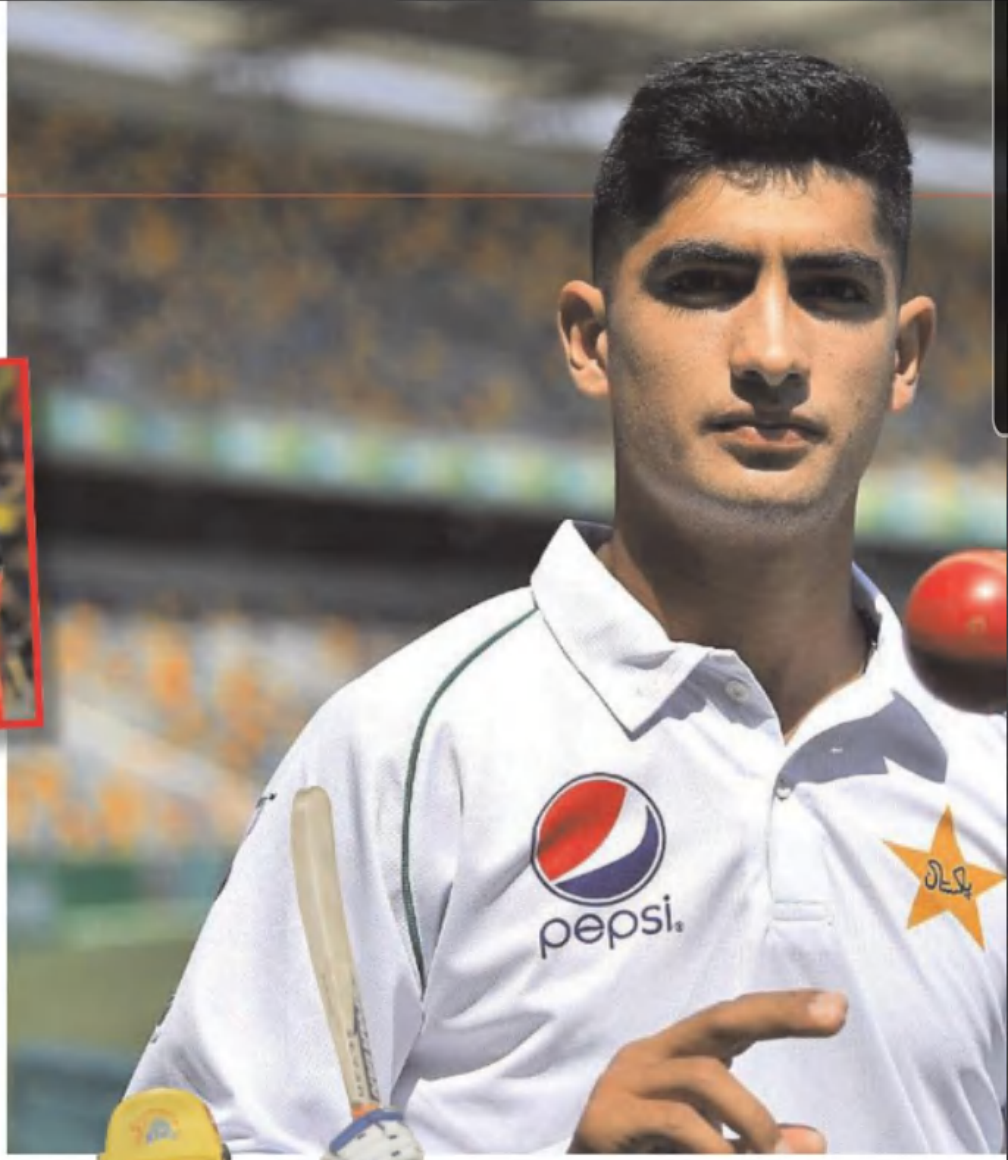
The Ram Janambhoomi issue, a highly political and religious matter would even have remote connections with cricket, nobody would have thought. However, that has happened. Indian fast bowler Mohammed Shami's wife Hasin Jahan had to lodge a police complaint after she was threatened online for her post on Ram Janambhoomi stone laying function. Jahan had congratulated everyone on the day of stone laying. As the matter got worse and Jahan was continuously threatened, she decided to lodge a police complaint at the Lalbazar Police Station under the cybercrime department. Although no arrests have been made till now, Police is expected to take action soon.

RCB TO WIN IPL TITLE

RCB haven't won any IPL title in the last 12 years and everyone is waiting to see the end of their losing streak. Many former cricketers have predicted that Virat Kohli's men will have a great season this year because of the conditions in the UAE. Former Australia cricketer, Brett Lee has his own say on the matter. The 43-year-old veteran speedster feels that Virat Kohli should reduce some pressure on himself as a player as well as captain. Lee wants Kohli to "enjoy" his game during the tournament. "I just want Kohli to go out there and enjoy his cricket, take all the pressure off himself as a captain and player," he said in the latest episode of Star Sports' Cricket Connected chat show.

MS Dhoni to rule IPL

With the Indian Premier League (IPL) about to start soon, all the fans of Dhoni would finally be able to watch him play. These fans have been expecting the 'Thala' to play international cricket and make a comeback in Team India. However, Aakash Chopra believes that Dhoni would not be bothered about team India selection as he has risen above that. Aakash feels that 39-year-old MSD's only focus would be to get Chennai into the finals. "CSK's success depends upon MSD a lot. If he is in god form, chances are that CSK would do well because then he would be involved a lot in the game." Further, he also said that Dhoni, even after not being part of any competitive match from July last year, would score runs.



END OF JASPRIT BUMRAH'S CAREER

Jasprit Bumrah is one of the best fast bowlers across formats in international cricket. However, his weird action has resulted in injuries. There are many former players, who feel he will not last long in international cricket due to his bowling action. His action puts a lot of burden on his back, which led to a serious injury before the three-match Test series against South Africa last year. Former cricketer Shoaib Akhtar, who has become a cricket guru after retirement, feels that it will be difficult for the Indian pacer to play all the formats due to his action. He also stated that he told his pals that Bumrah will break down at some point in his career.

DENNIS LILLEE OF PAKISTAN

Pakistan's pace sensation Naseem Shah has been a revelation since making his debut and his bowling has brought him accolades at a young age. The 17-year old bowler has already recorded a Test hat-trick and the way Naseem is bowling, he looks set for a bright future. Naseem Shah bowls with express pace and has already troubled the rivals with his accuracy. On the third day of the Test, Pakistan players were heard calling Naseem as 'Lillee Shah' which left everyone confused. According to his teammates, Naseem's bowling action resembles exactly to the great Dennis Lillee and that's why they were calling him Lillee.

SIDELINED BY PCB

Controversy in cricket and Pakistan go hand in hand it seems. The controversial Pakistani cricketer Danish Kaneria has not left any stone unturned to drag Pakistan Cricket in various trivial matters relating to discrimination. Starting afresh controversy, the 39-year-old Kaneria said that Umar Akmal's three-year ban was reduced but he is the only player who is being sidelined by PCB. "I don't play the religion card although I am accused of it many times. The only issue I have is with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). They have dealt well with the rest of the players, but when it comes to me, they have always sidelined me and my cause," Kaneria was quoted as saying to India TV.

SHOCKING REVELATION

There have been many incidents where Indian and Pakistani players have had some heated exchanges on the field. But MS Dhoni usually remained unaffected by it. However, Shoaib Akhtar revealed an exchange he had with Dhoni. It was the second Test of the 2006 series against India and Dhoni was playing when all of a sudden Shoaib coming round the wicket threw a beamer at the Indian wicketkeeper, which fortunately was wide. "It was an old 8-9 over spell. A real quick spell it was and Dhoni still managed to score runs and rather reached a hundred. I was frustrated to the core and that's why for the first in my entire career, I bowled a beamer deliberately. I realized my mistake and apologized to MS."

LAST WISH OF HAT-TRICK MAN

Amit Mishra is one of the best performers in the IPL. But as far as international cricket is concerned, he hasn't donned the Indian jersey for the last three years. Mishra made his last appearance for the Men in Blue in the 2017. However, the veteran spinner hasn't lost all his hopes to play for his country. When Mishra was asked if he is still hoping to make a comeback in the national squad, he replied that he is always ready to play for the Indian team.

Counselor for Hardik's son

Hardik and Natasa were recently blessed with a baby boy. The cricketer had shared the good news on social media platforms. While enjoying his duties, Hardik is posting adorable videos and pictures of his son. The newborn is hogging a lot of limelight these days. Hardik's brother Krunal recently uploaded a clip with his nephew. While people showered blessings on the little one, India batsman Rahul predicted the career profession of the junior Pandya. He suggested Krunal to make the baby boy a fast-bowling all-rounder in the future.

MS DHONI: A MESSIAH WHO REVOLUTIONIZED INDIAN CRICKET

Dhoni's stats are just sizzlers in the vast menu that the former captain put out on display on the international stage -- as a player...

BY RENIN WILBEN

10,773 runs in 350 ODIs, 4876 in 90 Tests, 1617 runs in T20Is, 829 dismissals as wicket-keeper. If one goes by numbers alone, the just-retired MS Dhoni has made a gigantic contribution to Indian cricket. Add it to his crowning glory as a skipper -- two World Cups, and a Champions Trophy triumph. However, Dhoni's stats are just sizzlers in the vast menu that the former captain put out on display on the international stage -- as a player, as a leader, and as an individual as a whole. Dhoni's presence in the Indian team over the last decade and a half has transformed the team's fortunes like few before him have done.

HERALDING A NEW ERA IN INDIAN CRICKET

March 23, 2007, at Port-of-Spain, was one of the lowest points of Indian cricket. Abject surrender to Sri Lanka in the league game dumped India out of the 2007 World Cup. Dhoni, himself, had a forgettable encounter, trapped lbw by the guile of Muttiah Muralitharan's first ball. However, it was under the same Dhoni that India turned things around a few months later, as a young team lifted the inaugural T20 World Cup in South Africa. It marked a completely fresh chapter in Indian cricket and was the beginning of the Dhoni era in no uncertain terms.

Left: His instinctive style often caught the opponents off-guard.

Right: Dhoni was often one step ahead of the opposition.

> "His presence in the the last decade and a half has transformed the team's fortunes."

DHONI THE CAPTAIN

In his very first World Cup, Dhoni proved what a shrewd thinker he is. His instinctive style often caught the opponents off-guard, none more prominently than in the final when his decision to give the unheralded Joginder Sharma the last over proved to be a master-stroke.

As a leader, Dhoni was often one step ahead of the opposition. His decision to promote himself in the 2011 World Cup final, ahead of the supremely in-form Yuvraj Singh, was a highly calculated move. With Gautam Gambhir out in the middle, the Indian captain was aware that a left-right combo would make the Sri Lankan bowlers work harder.

DHONI THE BATSMAN

As a batsman, Dhoni transformed himself from a hard-hitting lower-order batsman to arguably the best limited-overs finisher the world has ever seen. His decision to take the game to the very end had its critics. However, Dhoni backed his power-hitting and came out on top more often than not.

It was only towards the twilight of his career that this approach proved to be a handicap, as MSD failed to get the big shots going. However, till the very end, fans had hope until Dhoni was at the crease.

This was very much true in his last international game -- when he was run out for 50 in the 2019 World Cup semi-final. Indian supporters were optimistic about one last hurrah from Dhoni. Alas, it wasn't to be.

Above: Dhoni backed his power-hitting and came out on top.

Above Left: Dhoni's stellar rise to stardom is unique.

Left: Dhoni won't be seen in Indian colors again.

DHONI THE KEEPER

So successful was Dhoni the batsman and captain, his supreme wicket-keeping skills never got the due it deserved. The fact is that Dhoni could walk into any limited-overs playing eleven on the basis of his glove-work alone. Dhoni's blink-and-you-miss stumpings are fodder for numerous YouTube videos and his backhand flick is another example of his street-smart thinking. With Dhoni behind the stumps, batsmen could never take it easy. How much India missed Dhoni the keeper became evident when his replacement Rishabh Pant struggled to get even the basics right. Even when he wasn't skipper, Dhoni kept guiding the likes of Kuldeep Yadav and Yuzvendra Chahal, playing key roles in their rise as a potent spin duo.

A ONE-OF-A-KIND STORY

There are numerous rags to riches tales in Indian cricket. But, Dhoni's stellar rise to stardom is unique in itself. Before him, no other cricketer from Jharkhand had represented India. Still, Dhoni dared to dream even when working as a ticket inspector with the Indian Railways. The grand success of Dhoni not only put Jharkhand and Ranchi (his birthplace) on the world map but also inspired other cricketers from the state to think big. Since, the likes of Varun Aaron, Saurabh Tiwary, and, more recently, have gone on to represent India. Even as Dhoni won't be seen in Indian colors again, his contribution to Indian cricket will remain immortal.■

Left: He went on to help in the education of poor kids.

Right: Irfan arranged food for the flood victims.

IRFAN - THE MOST GENEROUS INDIAN CRICKETER

Irfan Pathan came to know about the plight of Chennai Super Kings' official cobbler, Bhaskaran...

BY ABHISHEK SINGH

While Indian cricketers have always been known for their charity work, most of them, be it Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, former India captain, MS Dhoni, or the current Indian captain, Virat Kohli, have made donations via trusts or by some foundations. But Irfan Pathan has been different. He not only donates but makes sure that the donation reaches the person it is meant for.

THE SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS BY PATHAN

Irfan Pathan came to know about the plight of Indian Premier League (IPL)'s side Chennai Super Kings' official cobbler, Bhaskaran, after reading a well-written piece on him in ESPNcricinfo. Irfan, who was signed by the franchise in 2015 made an effort on his part and from arranging his number to depositing Rs 25,000 into his account, making sure that Bhaskaran is not left

stranded because of the lockdown.

This effort of the junior Pathan came to the fore because of the pandemic; however, there was a similar case last year which was not known until Laxman tweeted about it.

Irfan along with former India players VVS Laxman and Aakash Chopra had helped out a Star Sports staff in the pantry, whose daughter was unwell.

It is small acts of generosity like this that make Irfan different from others.

PANDEMIC SHOWCASED IRFAN'S GENEROUS SIDE TO THE WORLD

Irfan along-with his brother has always been one of the most charitable cricketers of the current era. But it took a pandemic like Coronavirus for the world to realize and be aware of the deeds of kindness by the all-rounder brothers.

It was Irfan Pathan who had taken to Twitter on 23rd March to announce that he and his brother, Yusuf were donating 4,000 face masks to the health department under the banner Mehmood Khan Pathan Charitable Trust, an organization run by their father.

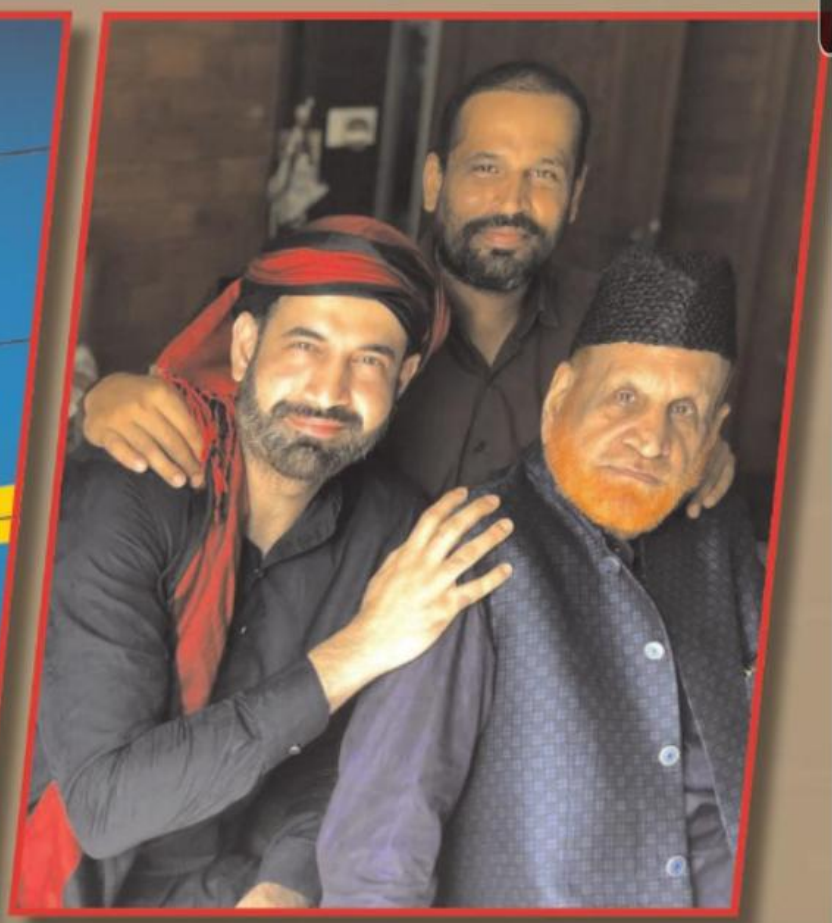
At the start of the lockdown, Pathan brothers had also distributed sanitizers and food in an underprivileged neighborhood in Vadodara.

They, reportedly, distributed around 5,000kg of rice, 5,000kg of wheat, 700kg of potatoes, and other food

Above: Pathan brothers had also distributed sanitizers and food.

Inset: Pathan brothers have often helped flood victims.

Extreme Inset: Mahmood Pathan used to do charity with a meager amount of Rs 3000.



packets to ones in need.

THE BARODA BOY HAS BEEN DOING IT FOR A LONG TIME

While most people choose to build academies or do business post-fame in cricket or even build trusts which are managed by others, Irfan decided to be different. He along with his brother and father not only built their own trust but back in 2014, the two brothers had started contributing about 40-50% of their earnings to the trust.

He went on to help in the education of poor kids alongside helping widows revive their lives and cancer patients get the opportunity to be treated well. The reason for such generosity of the Pathan brothers, especially Irfan, is his father. He looked up to him for inspiration as Mahmood Pathan used to do charity with a meager amount of Rs 3000 back when he used to earn.

> "It is small acts of generosity like this that make Irfan different from others."

Be it the floods of Kerala or Assam or the floods in Gujarat itself, Pathan brothers have often helped flood victims. They helped with relief materials for the ones affected in the floods in Kerala. Even during flash floods in the Vadodara district, they arranged food for the flood victims. Irfan performs acts of kindness without looking at the region, religion, caste, or creed of the person. All he wants is to reach to the last man possible so that he can help him or her. It is this attitude that makes him the most generous Indian cricketer.■

IRELAND'S WIN IS A CRYPTIC MESSAGE TO CRICKET

An interesting comment was made in the aftermath of Ireland's thrilling run chase about Ireland perhaps feeling freer without the burden...

BY SREELATA S. YELLAMRAZU

By announcing the ODI super league, the International Cricket Council (ICC), the ICC has attempted to bridge the gap. But as Ireland showed with their win over England, the pandemic demands a different landscape.

An interesting comment was made in the aftermath of Ireland's thrilling run chase about Ireland perhaps feeling freer without the burden of having to set a target as the reason for chasing down England's massive target in the third one day international.

It would be altogether easy for the cricket world to miss this mini clash of three one day internationals scheduled as it was between the West Indies Test series and the Pakistan Test series. Given the results of the first two one day internationals, there was every reason to think the third match might be no different.

But Ireland proved that their win over England in a similarly remarkable run chase like in the course of the ICC Cricket World Cup of 2011 is a sign that despite how the pandemic has only made an already disadvantaged cricket world even more skewed against the recent ICC Test entrants, the will to compete has not been suppressed.

Nothing like a win reiterates the need to pay attention to these pockets of cricket that have been left bereft of all, resources, finances, and opportunities not only because of the pandemic revising the schedule to suit financially lucrative parties on a bilateral series but

CAN 'CAPTAIN' ROHIT SHARMA BE THE NEXT DHONI OF TEAM INDIA?

Raina is absolutely right about Rohit's impressive captaincy skills. His incredible IPL record, leading Mumbai Indians to four titles, is there for everyone to see...

BY RENIN WILBEN

Can Rohit Sharma be the next MS Dhoni of the Indian team, and take the country to greater heights as captain? This is the question that has cropped up after former India batsman Suresh Raina termed Rohit as the 'next MS Dhoni for the Indian cricket team'. In the Super Over Podcast, Raina described Rohit as calm and someone who likes to listen. "When your captain is listening, you can solve a lot of problems, you can solve the mental problems of the players. So in my book, they both (Rohit and Dhoni) are wonderful," Raina explained.

TOO LATE TO MAKE DHONI-LIKE IMPACT

Raina is absolutely right about Rohit's impressive captaincy skills. His incredible IPL record, leading Mumbai Indians to four titles, is there for everyone to see. However, one cannot see Rohit making the kind of impact Dhoni has, if he indeed is chosen to lead India, owing to shortage of time. Rohit is 33 now and may play international cricket for another three or four years at most. One is really not too sure if and when he will get the leadership considering Virat Kohli remains the first-choice leader across formats.

Even if he is handed over the reins of the limited-overs side immediately, Rohit will have too big a mountain to climb to even come close to matching Dhoni's feats as leader of the Indian team. After all, the wizard from Ranchi remains the only captain in international cricket to have won all three ICC titles -- T20 World Cup (2007), 50-over World Cup (2011) and Champions Trophy (2013). It will be next to impossible for the most experienced of leaders to match the record, leave alone Rohit.

WHAT ROHIT CAN ACHIEVE

While Rohit being the next Dhoni of Indian cricket seems to be a far-fetched thought, the Mumbai batsman can still aim for a few glorious moments provided he takes over as leader, most probably in the limited-overs formats. As part of his stint as Mumbai Indians captain, Rohit has proved to be a highly able leader. It is under his captaincy that MI transformed from a team of struggling superstars to match-winners. Rohit's composure and ability to lead from the front as well as his man-management skills

Above Left: Rohit will have too big a mountain to climb.

Right: Rohit has proved to be a highly able leader.

Right: He undoubtedly has all the skills to succeed as India's skipper.

Extreme Right: He is the only captain to have won three ICC titles.

have won him many admirers. As part-time skipper, the opener has led India 10 times in ODIs, and has an 8-2 win-loss record. Although the sample size is too small, it is an indication of what the man can achieve given a longer run.

With Kohli failing to lead India to any ICC titles, the time is right now for him to hand over the mantle of leadership in the limited-overs formats to Rohit. Not only is the current vice-captain at the peak of his powers with the bat, he also enjoys the respect of his teammates, especially considering what he has achieved as a leader with MI. Following the postponement of the 2020 T20 World Cup, there could be two editions played back-to-back. If Rohit is leading the side, he should target these two tournaments to leave his mark as a leader in international cricket.

Rohit will be 36 by the time the 2023 50-Over World Cup arrives in India. If fit, he still could be around. And, it would be a perfect swansong if he, as captain, does a Dhoni and leads India to glory at home. The permutations and combinations are various. And first things first, Rohit must get a chance to prove his worth as a leader. He undoubtedly has all the skills to succeed as Team India skipper. While he doesn't have time on his side to match Dhoni, Rohit can still make a significant impact as a leader, given the opportunity, one that he thoroughly deserves.■

BALANCING FTP, T20S VERSUS WORLD CUP SCHEDULING

There is little doubt that there are as many World Cups in cricket as there are Twenty20 leagues currently underway in the game...

BY SREELATA S. YELLAMRAZU

As the preparations for the Indian Premier League (IPL) gathers momentum and the world gears up for the Caribbean Premier League (CPL), the question is whether the focus should be on how to balance the wheel versus where the next year's World Cup should be held.

There is little doubt that there are as many World Cups in cricket as there are Twenty20 leagues currently underway in the game. Even as the discussion rakes up once more about who - the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) or Cricket Australia (CA) - will host next year's ICC Twenty20 World Cup, there is a need for the International Cricket Council (ICC) to address the current situation where too few teams have their plans etched out following the pandemic break.

England is said to be still in a dismal situation despite the fact that the West Indies have successfully completed their tour and Pakistan are playing the first Test. Their limited-overs series with Australia is in the dock as the Australian cricketers are contemplating how to play in England and then fly to the UAE for the IPL.

The hurdles for the IPL abound in the fact that players and teams are expected to arrive a month in advance to the scheduled September schedule to meet the Coronavirus pandemic measures but also, for franchisees to have the opportunity to work with their teams and devise a conditioning camp to get them out of the rust/rest period and towards winning ways.

South Africa are battling internal wranglings as they are fighting broader issues of corruption and uncertainty of scheduling. It is throwing their fragile, recently laid down game plan in turmoil, and given the player turnover, they will be concerned, despite the innovative 3T cricket distraction, for their jitters to calm down with an international series.

The pandemic break and the rescheduling have meant that more than one team besides South Africa are looking at an immediate bleak future.

Australia are going all out to keep their date with the schedule of India's tour. But not many teams have India and thereby, a lucrative proposition in the offing. Calls for England to reciprocate the tour for the West Indies grows as players have been asked to undergo a pay cut despite the tour of England.

At a time when it is important that the ICC take cognizance of this FTP that is in immediate need of handling, it seems inane that after wasting more than three months in the offing while Cricket Australia refused to host the world cup this year, that they would waste more time finalizing whether CA and the BCCI would swap hosting rights for a year that is still far away when there are too many immediate concerns that need the attention of the governing body in consultation with its permanent board members on the collective issue regarding the state of the game.■

Top: England is said to be still in a dismal situation.

Above: Teams are expected to arrive a month in advance.

Left: Australia refused to host the world cup this year.

IPL: EUPHORIA FINE BUT THERE IS ALSO RESPONSIBILITY

The popular cash-rich tournament is normally held in the March-May window but because of reasons that have been well documented there was a great deal of suspense over...

BY PARTAB RAMCHAND

There is obviously a lot of anticipation over the conduct of the long-awaited IPL. The popular cash-rich tournament is normally held in the March-May window but because of reasons that have been well documented there was a great deal of suspense over whether it would be held at all. Now of course the suspense is over, the IPL will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10 and the long wait has already whetted the appetite of cricket fans. And summing up the euphoria is King's XI Punjab co-owner Ness Wadia who is confident that the 13th edition of the event is set to be ``the best ever.'' But he is also concerned about the safety of the players and all others involved. ``Even if there is one Covid-19 case the IPL could be doomed'' he said after the owners' meeting on Wednesday.

Wadia has a point. For one thing, the coronavirus

threat is still looming large the world over, and as there are over 6000 active cases in the UAE the conduct of the IPL has not received unanimous approval.

Secondly, the IPL is a mega event attracting worldwide attention and if it is to be affected in any way by Covid-19 it will not just be a question of eyebrows being raised and questions asked. The BCCI has sent an exhaustive 16-page SOP to teams for the smooth conduct of the tournament. It requires players, support staff team officials and owners to be part of the bio-secure environment. Wadia himself has not decided on traveling to the UAE for the tournament but emphasized that safety cannot be compromised. ``We have to adjust and acclimatize to the biosecure environment. Extraneous circumstances require ordinary people to do extraordinary things" he added.

Indeed, with eight teams and 60 games spread over 53 days, the organizers cannot afford any slip-up especially with local officials talking in terms of allowing a limited number of spectators at the three venues. One remembers all too well the incident involving Jofra Archer last month in England. He took a detour to go home – a basic human urge - but in these fraught times his move almost put entire England – West Indies series in jeopardy as he had breached medical and security protocols. The officials have to ensure that while cricket prospers on the field the larger picture of everyone's welfare is not ignored. The virus remains a threat and the hunger for profit should not override health concerns for everyone associated with the conduct of the IPL. ■

Above: IPL will be held in the UAE from September 19.

Inset: He is concerned about the safety of the players.

Above Right: The BCCI has sent an exhaustive 16-page SOP to teams.

ORADE
پاکستان

Babar has it in him to make it a fab five

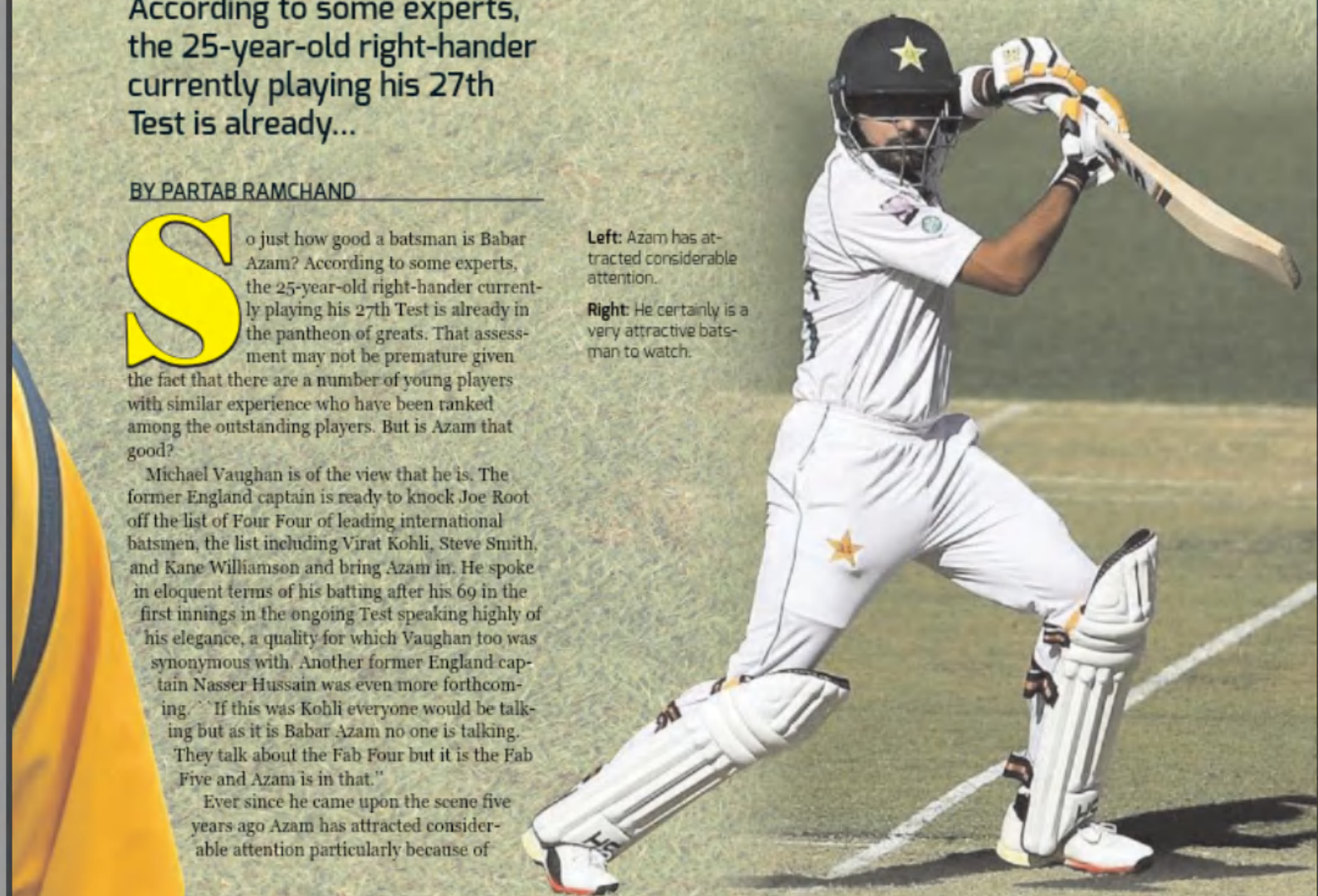
According to some experts, the 25-year-old right-hander currently playing his 27th Test is already...

BY PARTAB RAMCHAND

So just how good a batsman is Babar Azam? According to some experts, the 25-year-old right-hander currently playing his 27th Test is already in the pantheon of greats. That assessment may not be premature given the fact that there are a number of young players with similar experience who have been ranked among the outstanding players. But is Azam that good?

Michael Vaughan is of the view that he is. The former England captain is ready to knock Joe Root off the list of Four Four of leading international batsmen, the list including Virat Kohli, Steve Smith, and Kane Williamson and bring Azam in. He spoke in eloquent terms of his batting after his 69 in the first innings in the ongoing Test speaking highly of his elegance, a quality for which Vaughan too was synonymous with. Another former England captain Nasser Hussain was even more forthcoming. "If this was Kohli everyone would be talking but as it is Babar Azam no one is talking. They talk about the Fab Four but it is the Fab Five and Azam is in that."

Ever since he came upon the scene five years ago Azam has attracted considerable attention particularly because of



Left: Azam has attracted considerable attention.

Right: He certainly is a very attractive batsman to watch.

Left: Azam still has to prove himself.

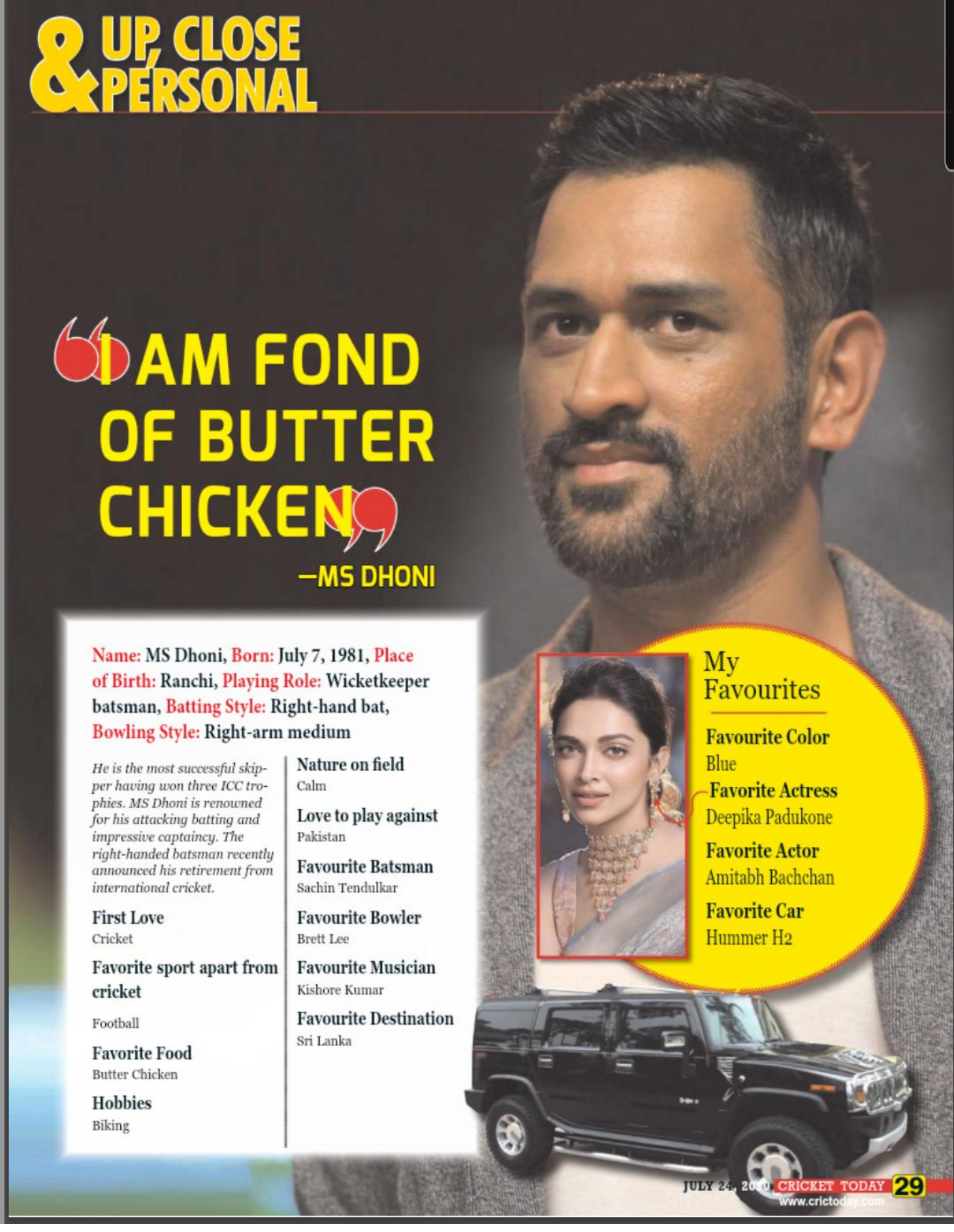
Above Right: He has hit five hundreds in 27 Tests.

his stylish approach. He certainly is a very attractive batsman to watch and in these days of T-20 cricket, with switch hits and reverse sweeps and helicopter shots it is rare to come across a stylist going by the textbook in playing attractive strokes. Of late what has attracted even more attention is that he has added substance to style. In his last eight Test innings including the 69, he has got four hundreds, a 90 and two sixties. In his last 12 ODI innings, he has three hundreds and four half-centuries.

Be that as it may it would not be wrong to say that Azam still has to prove himself that he belongs in the Fab Four. Let's not forget that we are talking about a quartet of world-class players who form the apotheosis of batsmanship through years of performing at the highest level. Kohli, Smith, Williamson, and Root have been around for a decade playing from 73 Tests to 94 Tests, hitting centuries and double centuries, scoring 6000 and 7000 runs and averaging over 50 (except in the case of Root who averages 48). With all the vast improvement of late Azam averages a shade under 45, has scored just under 2000 runs and hit five hundreds in 27 Tests with a highest of 143. In ODIs of course he is already up there with the best averaging 54 and with eleven hundreds in 72 innings.

Azam might have won his spurs though there are detractors who hint that he would need a few more years to be as good as Kohli. But what is not up for debate is his easy grace his off-side strokes in particular being a study in elegance. And if he is not yet in the class of the Fab Four he is already very close to being rated so highly so as to make it the Fab Five. ■

& UP, CLOSE & PERSONAL



"I AM FOND OF BUTTER CHICKEN"

—MS DHONI

Name: MS Dhoni, **Born:** July 7, 1981, **Place of Birth:** Ranchi, **Playing Role:** Wicketkeeper batsman, **Batting Style:** Right-hand bat, **Bowling Style:** Right-arm medium

He is the most successful skipper having won three ICC trophies. MS Dhoni is renowned for his attacking batting and impressive captaincy. The right-handed batsman recently announced his retirement from international cricket.

First Love
Cricket

Favorite sport apart from cricket
Football

Favorite Food
Butter Chicken

Hobbies
Biking

Nature on field
Calm

Love to play against
Pakistan

Favourite Batsman
Sachin Tendulkar

Favourite Bowler
Brett Lee

Favourite Musician
Kishore Kumar

Favourite Destination
Sri Lanka

My Favourites

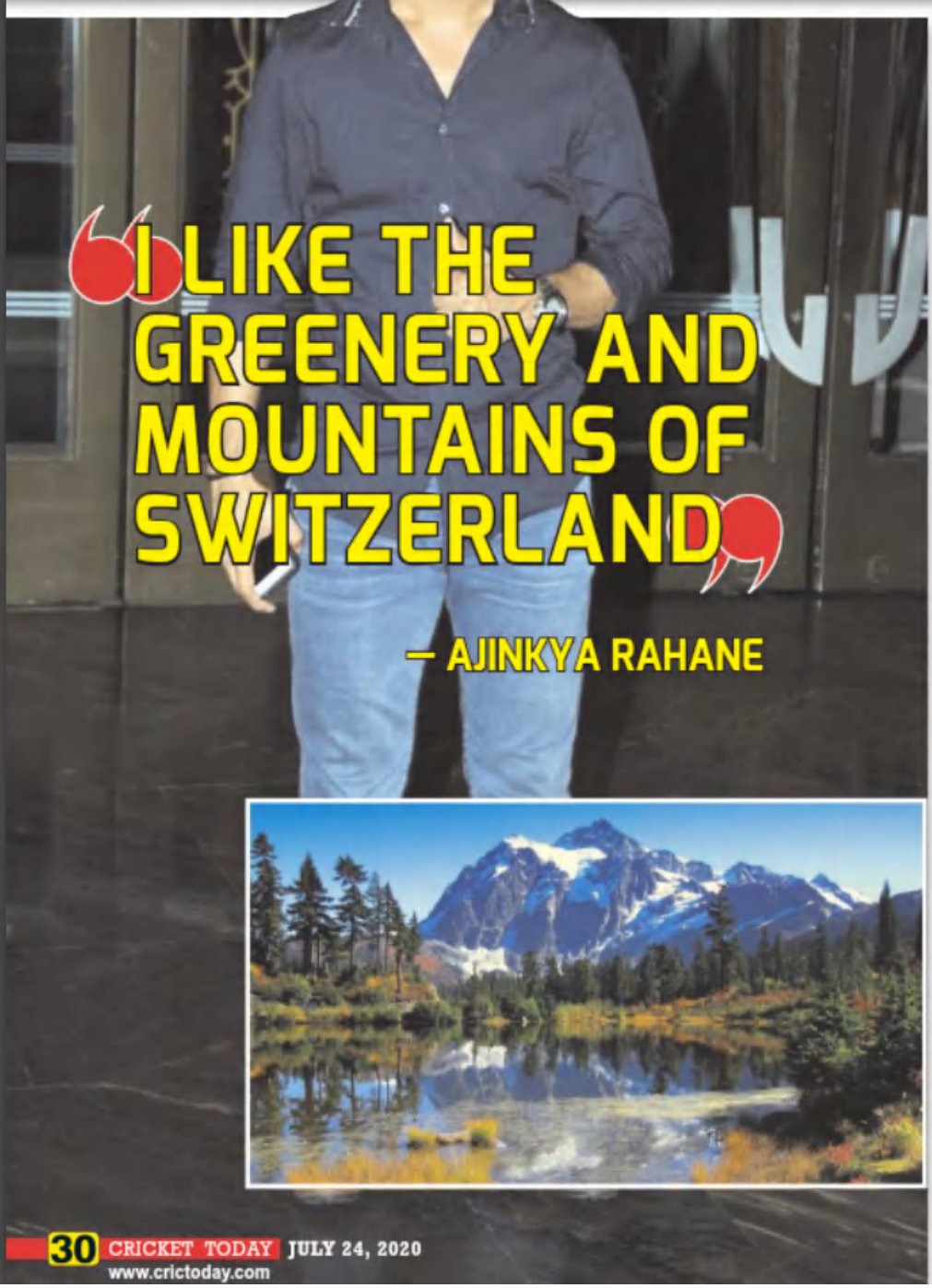
Favourite Color
Blue

Favorite Actress
Deepika Padukone

Favorite Actor
Amitabh Bachchan

Favorite Car
Hummer H2

& TRAVEL LEISURE



"I LIKE THE GREENERY AND MOUNTAINS OF SWITZERLAND"

– AJINKYA RAHANE

Favorite hotel in the world
ITC Windsor in Bengaluru is the best place of comfort and luxury in the world.

USP of the hotel
The location, the view, the feel and the ambiance of this place spell class right from the first look. I like this place because of great interior décor, amazing choice of food and comfortable rooms. This hotel truly depicts a luxury class and I was indeed impressed by the warmth and caring attitude of the staff. I have thoroughly enjoyed my stay during the last couple of years.

Favorite destination in the world
Switzerland is my preferred destination because of its natural beauty.

What is that you like about this place?
I like the greenery and mountains of Switzerland. The Swiss Alps are among the most beautiful mountains in the world.

What do you like to do on holidays?
Spending time with my wife and other family members is my top priority on holidays. I like to explore new places with my better half.

Most memorable meal while travelling
We had a delicious vegetarian food at the road side Dhaba on our way from Chandigarh to Dharamsala during one of the editions of the Indian Premier League. Dal Makhini was mouthwatering and I am still looking for that kind of taste. However, Pasta, Fish along with Punjabi and Gujarati food are my favorable food items.

What is the one thing you always pack before leaving for any destination?
I keep god's picture at the first instance of packing. ■

TRENDING

"India can manage without MS Dhoni in the 2021 T20 World Cup"

AAKASH CHOPRA

ON MS DHONI'S CAREER

CRICKET IS LIFE

While some people get diverted by the attention they get after success in one field, they jump to any offer they get from a vastly different field. But the 27-year-old Bangladeshi women's team fast bowler Jahanara Alam is surely not one of them. Having tried her hands at dramatics, she was showered with offers for movies and dramas, but the player decided against it. Jahanara who made her debut back in 2011 believes that her only love is cricket and she would not trade it for anything else. "Cricket is my love and I love it so much that I can't just think of going anywhere else. I don't at all wish to go into acting. The little bit acting I did was also after a lot of requests and for a change of taste. Since then I got plenty of offers in dramatics. I was even offered two films, but I rejected them all as I wanted all my attention to be only devoted to cricket and nothing else," Jahanara told Anandabazar.

PATH OF LORD RAM

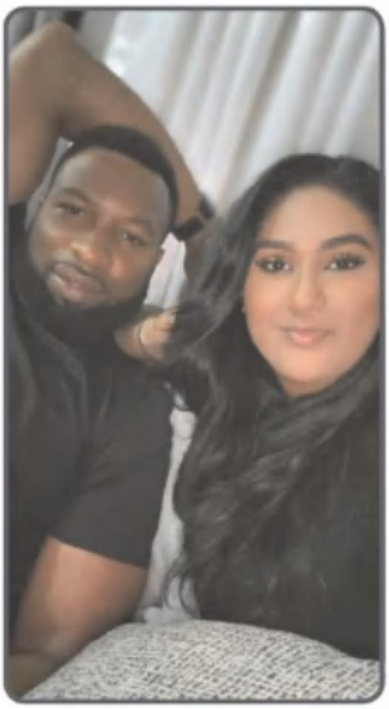
Tainted Pakistani spinner, Danish Kaneria has expressed his desire of visiting the grand Ram Temple once it is completed. Showing his interest in India's visit, Kaneria tweeted that he follows the path shown by Lord Ram to all Hindus. Quoting a tweet from a Hindi news channel, where they had quoted Kaneria, the Karachi born said, "For us, it is a religious place and if I get an opportunity, I would definitely like to come to Ayodhya. I am a devoted Hindu and I always try to follow the path shown by Lord Ram." Tainted Pakistani spinner, Danish Kaneria has expressed his desire of visiting the grand Ram Temple once it is completed. Showing his interest in India's visit, Kaneria tweeted that he follows the path shown by Lord Ram to all Hindus.

MOTIVATIONAL TALK

Sometimes, when you decide something and decide strongly that you want to pursue it, there are divine interventions that cause you to change it. However, in former Indian pacer Nehra's case, the intervention was not divine but rather human. Suffering from a stiff back, the Delhi born pacer wanted to get himself out of the 2011 World Cup. "Just before the World Cup, Praveen got injured and was replaced by Sreesanth. Back then I was really struggling with my back. I told MS about it and asked him to replace me," said Nehra. But then Dhoni intervened and asked Nehra to just take it one game each before thinking anything else.

SOCIAL BUZZ

insta



WHAT A YEAR 2020 HAS BEEN

ABSOLUTELY BLESSED!! LOVE MY GIRLS

FANTASTIC WIN

333 CAPS LIT

facebook

A little R&R to start off the week — Bumrah

We said "Yes" along with our families— Chahal

Family — Suresh Raina

A prayer for everyone to be blessed and protected at all times — Yuvraj Singh

twitter

@MohammadKaif: "My deepest condolences to Shri Yadupati Singhania's family. This feels like a personal loss"

@MichaelVaughan: "Even without Ben Stokes England are too strong"

@bhogleharsha: "Franchise owners and coaches scrambling to see how to manage with the players they will lose"

@imVkohli: "Loyalty above everything. Can't wait for what's to come"

@sanjaymanjrekar: "On helicopter shot - Dhoni never slogs across the line"

CONTEST CORNER

Find six differences between these two pictures

Last month's winners: Nishikant (Delhi), Nidhi (Haryana), Pankaj (Pune)

Last month's answers:

In this contest you have to spot six differences between both the pictures. Three lucky winners will get a Parker pen each.

Rules & Regulations for the contest

- **Last date for entries:** August 24, 2020.
- A draw will determine the winner.
- Winners name will be announced in the next issue of cricket today.
- The prizes may vary from the one shown.
- Send in your answers along with your name, occupation, address, contact No. and Email ID at our postal address.

Our postal address

Cricket Today: X-30, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020 Ph: 011 40712100 Fax: 011 41611866

BEST OF THE WEEK

MOST SEARCHED CRICKETERS IN THE WORLD

16.2 LAKH TIMES VIRAT KOHLI

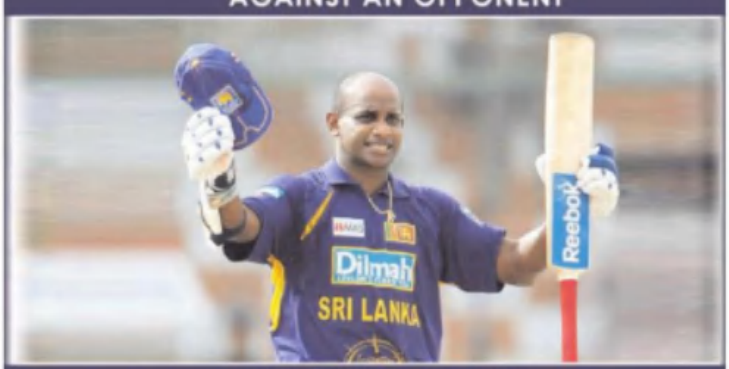
9.7 LAKH TIMES ROHIT SHARMA

9.4 LAKH TIMES MS DHONI

MOST RUNS IN A CALENDAR YEAR ACROSS FORMATS SINCE 2016

2016 - VIRAT KOHLI (2595 RUNS)
2017 - VIRAT KOHLI (2818 RUNS)
2018 - VIRAT KOHLI (2735 RUNS)
2019 - VIRAT KOHLI (2443 RUNS)

MOST ODI MATCHES PLAYED AGAINST AN OPPONENT



S JAYASURIYA - 89 vs IND
M JAYAWARDENE - 87 vs IND

MOST RUNS BY ROHIT SHARMA AT A VENUE

VISAKHAPATNAM - 663
MIRPUR - 635
KOLKATA - 569

THE FINAL OVER SPECIALISTS IN IPL

MS DHONI - 46 SIXES, SR - 244
R SHARMA - 23 SIXES, SR - 288

HIGHEST STRIKE RATE IN SUPER OVERS IN IPL

YUSUF PATHAN - 450

Godrej
CINTHOL
AWESOME MEN
CINTHOL HEAD TO TOE WASH
ACTIVE IMPACT
CINTHOL SHAVE +FACE WASH
FRESH BURST
CINTHOL AFTER SHAVE AFTER TRIM
CINTHOL BEARD OIL
CINTHOL BEARD WAX
CINTHOL BEARD +FACE WASH
SENSITIVE
CINTHOL HAIR GEL
CINTHOL HAIR CREAM